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February 2, 1998  
(Justice)

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Justice Minister responds to new evidence in Gregory Parsons case

Gregory Parsons was charged with the first degree murder of his mother Catherine Carroll on January 10, 1991. He was convicted after trial of second degree murder, and was released on bail pending appeal. The appeal resulted in a new trial being ordered, which was to commence on March 2, 1998.

Because of new evidence just available to the Crown, a decision was made to enter a Stay of Proceedings in the Gregory Parsons case. It was filed with the Supreme Court of Newfoundland late this afternoon.

After investigation in 1991, the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary concluded there was sufficient evidence to charge Mr. Parsons with first degree murder, although there was no physical evidence to connect Gregory Parsons with the death of his mother. At the time, the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary submitted several items to the RCMP Crime Detection Laboratory in Halifax for analysis. The type of analysis was confined to blood typing and a type of DNA analysis called RFLP which required measurable quantities of blood. With little or no blood tracing on the items, there were insufficient quantities for DNA analysis.

In late 1995, the RCMP Crime Laboratory commenced the use of a new method of DNA analysis. This new method, called PCR (STR) requires very small quantities of biological substance (not just blood) for analysis. On becoming aware of the new DNA testing technique, the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary requested that the Crown seek release of court exhibits for further testing. This occurred, with the consent of Gregory Parsons.

DNA analysis completed by the Crime Laboratory in Ottawa was received by the Crown last week. It indicates that the male DNA found on the submitted items was not that of Gregory Parsons.

Mr. Parsons' counsel has been informed of the Crown's decision to enter a Stay of Proceedings in this case. The Royal Newfoundland Constabulary has already re-opened its investigation into the homicide of Catherine Carroll.

This case highlights the value and importance of legal safeguards in place for the protection of accused persons and the importance of keeping abreast of new technologies. The Royal Newfoundland Constabulary are to be commended for seeking the release of court exhibits so that additional analysis could be conducted.

Within the context of all that was available at the time, the police investigated the death of Catherine Carroll and followed where the evidence led. I am pleased that with the new evidence today, the Justice system has proved its diligence and the charge against Mr. Parsons has been stayed.

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5:15 p.m.



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